DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 085 774 CS 500 488

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TITLE Accountability: Who's Accountable to Whom?
PUB DATE 25 Oct 73
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the meeting of the Nebraska Speech Association October 25, 1973

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Behavioral/Objectives; *Communication Skills; *Curriculum Design; *Educational Accountability; Effective Teaching; Evaluation; Evaluation Criteria; Professional Associations; Relevance (Education); Speech Curriculum; *Speech Education; Student Motivation; Teacher Attitudes; Teaching Techniques

ABSTRACT

Members of the speech education profession must meet the challenge of educational accountability. In accord with the leadership of the Speech Communication Association, teachers should develop internal accountability to ward off externally enforced accountability terms. State speech associations should support the work of the national organization. By working together, speech teachers can support the ideal that "speech communication is central to human existence; central to human learning; central to education." (DS)

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ACCOUNTABILITY: WHO'S ACCOUNTABLE TO WHOM?

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Given the following 30 to 40 minute speech, you should be able to do the following:

1. Explain in 100 words or less what accountability means to you as a professional speech communication educator.
2. Distinguish between internal and external professional accountability.
3. List three questions that must be answered by the speech communication profession in order to develop internal accountability.
4. Support or refute the notion that if we do not attend to our own accountability, others will describe that for which we will be accountable.
5. Make at least one recommendation as to how our profession can become more unified in its approach to accountability from the state to the regional and national levels as well as from the national and regional levels to the state level.
6. Make at least one recommendation as to the role of the Nebraska Speech Communication Association in the effort to establish a united, accountable professional force.
7. Determine how much <u>personal</u> energy you are willing to invest in developing internal accountability for the speech communication profession.

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During the next 30 to 40 minutes, I will discuss:

1. External pressures on teacher accountability.
2. The development of internal accountability by the Speech Communication profession for the accountability of our teachers.
3. The role of your state association in determining internal accountability for the Speech Communication profession.

External Pressures on Teacher Accountability

In Teaching as a Subversive Activity, Postman and Weingartner develop this thesis:

> ...that change is the most striking characteristic of the world we live in and that our educational system has not yet recognized this fact. ...that the abilities and attitudes required to deal adequately with change are those of the highest priority and that it is not beyond our ingenuity to design school environments which can help young people to master concepts necessary to survival in a rapidly changing world. The institution we call 'school' is what it is because we made it that way.[1]

"...because we made it that way." This seems to be an accusation--or a challenge--depending on how you choose to view it. Who are the "we's" that Postman and Weingartner refer to?

The authors were relatively safe in making this statement because they could be fairly sure that no matter what the role of the reader--parent, teacher, principal, school board member, student, taxpayer--he could probably say to himself, "Yes, I guess I did help to make it that way." Each of us can assume some accountability for what happens in the schools. Why? Because the central function of education is the process of providing teaching-learning environments in which people--little people, big people--are changed in exchange for dollars. All of us fit in somewhere in the process either as teachers who facilitate change, people who are expected to change, suppliers of methods and materials designed to enduce change,

administrators of change, or taxpayers who put up the cash to pay for the people, materials, and buildings used to create the environment in which the changing of people--or lack of changing of people--occurs.

In reading the literature on accountablity, it appears that this broad base of responsibility has been a major problem. Something for which nearly everyone is in some way responsible can become the responsibility of nobody. Furthermore, it becomes tempting to lay blame on others--to say, for example:

"Kids aren't motivated to learn!"

"Teachers will be evaluated and monies will be allocated by the state to school districts on the basis of measureable, behavioral change in students!"

"You can't measure behaviors in the affective domain!"

"Textbooks are written above the students' reading levels!"

"Vote NO on the millage proposal!"

I'm sure you can think of other reactions.

A key question in accountability is who is responsible to whom? What is the line of responsibility? Ernest House, Project Director at the Center for Instructional Research and Curriculum Evaluation at the University of Illinois--Urbana, writes:

> Not long into any discussion of accountability, someone raises the question 'Who is accountable to whom?' Almost invariably the response is that one is accountable to his superior. In fact, most people apparently perceive the society as being a vast hierarchy in which each person is accountable to his boss and his boss is accountable to someone else and so on. In this conception the school district, the society, the world is perceived as being organized like a vast bureaucracy, a gigantic corporation. Accountability is upward. Each person is accountable to the institution.[2]

This notion of upward accountability is an economic concept which places the teacher at the bottom of the chain and furthest from the source of economic support. Yet the teacher is often assumed ultimately responsible for the

"shaping of the product"--for the results. As one educator states,

> Accountability accentuates results--it aims squarely at what comes out of an educational system rather than what goes into it. ...It assumes that if no learning has taken place, no teaching has taken place either.[3]

In 1970, the year that President Nixon formally introduced the concept of "accountability" to the nation in an address on education, Whitney Young, Executive Director of the National Urban League, gave a speech before a convention of the Kappa Delta Pi in which he placed ultimate responsibility on the teacher. He said:

> Let's be very clear about the function of a teacher. A teacher is paid to teach children. An engineer is paid to design, let us say, an airplane. The measure of an engineer's success, and therefore, his qualifications to continue to hold his job, is whether the plane he designed will fly. The measure of a teacher's success, and therefore, her qualifications to continue to hold her job, is whether her students learn what they are supposed to learn at their grade level.
>
> Nobody asks the engineer about the problems he has in designing a plane. Nobody wants to know if it is hard or easy. Nobody is especially interested in whether his plant is in a ghetto or in a suburban industrial park. They just want to know if the plane will fly.
>
> Well, we just want to know if children will learn; if their spirits will soar and their minds grow. We shouldn't pass the buck and fill the air with tales of how hard it is to teach slum kids or anything else. That's basically irrelevant. Either kids learn or they don't. If they do, then the teacher has done the job for which she has been trained and which society pays her to do. If they do not, then we must question her competence and ask her to go into some other profession.
>
> This sounds harsh only to those among you who don't mind flying in a plane designed by an engineer whose previous designs wound up in a heap at the end of the runway.
>
> .... Results, not good or ill will, is the issue here.[4]

What do we, speech communication educators, say to Mr. Young? That teachers cannot be compared with engineers? That kids should not be compared with airplanes? Robert Lovett, a teacher from New York City, responded to Mr. Young with these observations:

1. "Mr. Young seems to insist that full accountability for educational success or failure lies with the classroom teacher and assumes that we know what a given child should know at a given grade level."[5] (And I ask myself, a teacher of speech communication, do I know what a given child should or does feel and know at a given grade level? I don't think so.)
2. Mr. Lovett continues, "Will the teacher be responsible for improving only academic skills? What about fostering creativity, patriotism, critical thinking, social responsibility, good health habits, psychological maturity, and social development?"[6] (And I ask myself, a speech communication teacher, what about these areas of human development--what behavioral changes can I best be responsible for in these areas? I am not sure.)
3. Mr. Lovett continues, "If a teacher--or an educational system--is to be accountable for <u>anything</u>, society must first establish what its goals are. Does it want purely cognitive learning? Will it stress affective learning?"[7] (And I ask myself, a speech communication teacher, what do I want--how can I best facilitate and measure both cognitive and affective learning? I am not sure.)
4. Then Mr. Lovett states, "It may well be that the question of who is accountable for good learning cannot be discussed only in terms of the teacher and the classroom. It may be necessary to create a chain of accountability if practical, long-lasting results are to be found."[8] (And I ask myself, a speech communication teacher, where do I want to be in this chain? For what am I willing to be accountable? I am not sure.)

In respect to the position of the teacher in the chain of accountability,

Helen Bain, former President of the National Education Association and current member of the Speech Communication Association, writes:

> ...it is purely a myth that classroom teachers can ever be held accountable, with justice under existing conditions. The classroom teacher has either too little control or no control over the factors which might render accountability either feasible or fair." She continues, "As a beginning, the teaching profession must be afforded those legal rights necessary for it to assume responsibility and accountability for its own professional destiny. As a minimum, this includes transferring to the profession the following: (1) authority over issuing, suspending, revoking, or reinstating the legal licensure of educational personnel; (2) authority to establish and administer standards of professional practice and ethics for all educational personnel; (3) authority to accredit teacher preparation institutions; and (4) authority to govern in-service and continuing education for teachers." Finally, Mrs. Bain states, "To make the easy assumption that teachers are primarily responsible for the quality of education today is absurdly naive. But teachers could be held accountable if this society were to see the wisdom of helping the profession devise its own self-governance.[9]

(And again I ask myself, a speech communication teacher, is the Speech Communication profession ready to license speech communication educators, to accredit speech communication teacher education programs, to govern in-service and continuing education programs for speech communication teachers? I don't think so!)

In his final response to Mr. Young, Mr. Lovett writes that the educational community "...must declare for what it is willing to be held accountable."[10] I ask us, Speech Communication educators, for what are we willing to be held accountable? Our answers to this question, as a profession, are vital to our survival in the world of education. To put it another way, we must articulate internal accountability within our profession in order to determine and to have the power to negotiate our role in the general scheme of educational accountability. If the Speech Communication profession does not develop internal accountability, we will continue as educators to be the victim of external pressures to be accountable on externally enforced terms.

The Development of Internal Accountability

Like most responses to the accountability issue, the responses of our profession are primarily defensive, not offensive; primarily reactive, not active. Marvin Alkin of the Center for the Study of Evaluation at the University of California--Los Angeles, views accountability as "...a negotiated relationship in which the participants agree in advance to accept specified rewards and costs on the basis of evaluation findings as to the attainment of specific ends."[11] To give you and me the power to negotiate a relationship for our accountability within the educational system, we must have the answers to three questions which are critical to our survival as Speech Communication educators:

1. What is it that Speech Communication uniquely contributes to the human being in his process of change and growth that no other discipline provides as effectively?
2. What are the characteristics of the people, buildings, textbooks, materials, and measuring devices that we need to facilitate such changes in students and that we need to assist would-be Speech Communication teachers to achieve the competencies essential for facilitating changes in students related to Speech Communication?
3. Finally, how much money do we need to be able to assume the responsibility--to be accountable--for what we do best?

The answers to these questions will give us the power to negotiate. Armed with these answers, we will be ready, as James Laffey, member of the Commission on Reading for the National Council of Teachers of English, says to seize accountability as an opportunity "...to hold the public accountable for the resources and support needed by the schools."[12] Without such support, we cannot be held accountable for student learning.

The Speech Communication Association is presently taking at least three giant steps toward answering these questions.

1. The proposed national development project on instructional goals, headed by Ron Allen of Wisconsin, is designed to provide definitive data on the developmental Speech Communication competencies of children and youth. The project consists of input, synthesis, and validation phases. In the input phase, data will be collected from teachers, parents, children, youth, and subject matter experts regarding the competencies and needs of children and youth in the area of Speech Communication. Input will also be provided from a comprehensive review of developmental literature. A synthesis phase of the project is designed to generate guidelines based on Speech Communication competencies and needs of children and youth. In the validation phase, the competencies and needs will be verified.[13] Such information is crucial to the development of Speech Communication curricula, teacher competencies, teacher preparation programs, certification models, and accreditation procedures. As one educator writes, this kind of data will help us to think of accountability "...in terms of what the student needs in order to realize his fullest potential as a person, rather than what it is the public wants--which is often defined in self-serving economic and social terms."[14]

2. At the Memphis Conference of Speech Communication Teacher Educators last August, it was recommended by the conferees that the Associate Executive Secretary for Education, Barbara Brilhart, should establish procedures to identify the types and characteristics of interaction that take place in various learning environ-

ments and contexts at all levels of education in order to (A) identify speech communication competencies needed by all teachers, kindergarten through higher education; (B) evaluate and research these competencies to determine their impact on student learning; and (C) disseminate these data to appropriate professional associations, teacher educators, and persons within the fifty state departments of public instruction. Barbara Brilhart has named an SCA/ATA Task Force on Guidelines for Teacher Preparation in Communication, Drama, and Media Education that will begin work on November 9 . The results of this project should help us determine effective and efficient teacher preparation programs for all teachers of Speech Communication at all educational levels as well as competencies in Speech Communication needed by all teachers. The work of this Task Force should also lead to a position statement on teacher certification and program accreditation.

3. As of this year, our profession is represented by Bill Work and Barbara Brilhart in the Association of Organizations for Teacher Education. Interaction with representatives of other disciplines is critical to our profession, for Speech Communication competencies are the concern of many disciplines. For example, C. A. Bowers, Chairman of the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Oregon, writes that all teachers should be held accountable "...for teaching students, in addition to the basic tools of communication, to raise their own questions, to make their own synthesis of ideas, to trust their own insights, and to understand their culture so they will no longer be influenced by its unexamined premises."[15] H. A. Wilson,

Director of Exercise Development for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, wrote last September that the NAEP has been given the mandate to assess "...the attitudes, interests, values, and appreciations of young Americans in a free society."[16] Dr. Wilson continues, talking about the assessing of "...valuing the worth of individuals and an appreciation of social problems."[17] Michael Shugrue, English Secretary for the Modern Language Association, stated in a speech before the 1971 Convention of the Speech Association of the Eastern States:

> It should be clear that the demand for educational accountability in teaching and learning of language in all its uses is working a revolution in English, a revolution coming slowly, to be sure, but a revolution of profound significance. "...our best scholars have begun to define aims and goals for English which will effect classrooms from the elementary school to the graduate department. As these statements are translated into curricular terms, as new textbooks are produced, those of us who share in developing the imaginations of our students will have found our educational objectives. And these humanistically oriented objectives will provide us with the accountability we are asked to render.[18]

Clearly, educational accountability is stimulating positive revolutions in all disciplines, not just in Speech Communication. Membership in the Association of Organizations for Teacher Education provides an opportunity for exchange between the disciplines. It is important to Speech Communication in at least three ways: First, to communicate to representatives of other disciplines what it is that Speech Communication educators are prepared to teach; second, to communicate why it is imperative that all educators develop personal and teaching competencies in Speech Communication under the supervision of Speech Communication teachers; and third, to articulate for what Speech Communication educators are <u>willing</u> to be held accountable.

The Role of the State Speech Association

In achieving internal accountability for our profession, it is important that the Speech Communication Educators in schools throughout the country can ultimately live by the guidelines and standards of accountability as they may be defined by our professional associations, particularly our national association. Two years ago when he was President of the Speech Communication Association, Ted Clevinger challenged us to reassert the primacy of teaching in our profession. He recommended that an important means of professional survival will be our ability to "...work harder than ever before to tie this profession together at the national, regional, and state levels."[19] Last year in his presidential statement, Bob Jeffrey strongly recommended that as a profession we should "...design desired communication competencies at all levels of instruction and educational strategies to achieve them...."[20] Achieving a data base which will in turn help us establish internal accountability appears to be a priority of our national association. This leads to the phenomenon that persons inside your profession are going to be making decisions that directly relate to you and your teaching; your research.

Being aware of this phenomenon, the conferees in the Pre-Service Division at the Memphis Conference of Speech Communication Teacher Educators expressed concern that a need exists for immediate and consistent local input into projects and guidelines proposed and developed at the national level.[21] The conferees also supported a recommendation that

> ...the Educational Policies Board [of SCA] should establish a special task force on educational accountability in Speech Communication with the twin tasks of developing ways of meeting accountability demands imposed from without while exploring ways of exerting creative leadership in expanding and redefining the concept of accountability.[22]

We are less than an hour and a half into a state convention of Speech Communication educators. Perhaps with careful planning, perhaps by coincidence you have invited to your convention the Associate Executive Secretary for Education on the Speech Communication Association; the President of the Central States Speech Association; and the Chairman of the CSSA Advisory Committee. I not only invite you, I challenge you to use the next two days to go beyond talk to the task of making recommendations for action that can be considered by your Association as a whole. I challenge you to consider this conference, at least in part, as an action caucus during which the needs of each of you are formulated as proposals to be considered by all of you. I challenge you to communicate your recommendations to the regional and national levels. I challenge you to be accountable to each other and to the others in our profession.

Let us look upon the issue of accountability as the long-awaited opportunity to "get ourselves together" in order to systematically support our long held belief that Speech Communication is central to human existence; central to human learning; central to education. Let us also accept the challenge that exists within the potential reality that if we do not address ourselves internally, cohesively, and consistently at the state, regional, and national levels to the issue of accountability, then we will unquestionably be accounted for. Let us begin by being accountable to each other.

Footnotes

[1]Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, Teaching as a Subversive Activity. New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1969, xiii-xiv.

[2]Ernest House, "Economic Accountability," The Educational Forum, XXXVII (November, 1972), 13-14.

[3]Kenneth P. Mortimer, "What is Accountability?" in Accountability for Educational Results. Edited by R. W. Hostrop, J. A. Mecklenburger, and J. A. Wilson. Hamden, Conn.: Linnet Books, 1973, 45-46.

[4]Whitney M. Young, Jr., "The Crisis in Urban Education," Kappa Delta Pi Record, VII (April, 1970), 98-99.

[5]Robert Lovett, "Professional Accountability in the Schools," Kappa Delta Pi Record, VII (October, 1970), 4.

[6]Ibid., 5.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Helen Bain, "Self-Governance Must Come First, Then Accountability," in Accountability for Educational Results, op. cit., 357-59.

[10]Lovett, op. cit., 5-6.

[11]Marvin Alkin, "Accountability Defined," in Accountability for Educational Results, op. cit., 51.

[12]James L. Laffey, "Accountability: A Brief History and Analysis," in Accountability and Reading Instruction: Critical Issues. Edited by Robert B. Ruddell. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1973, 11.

[13]Proceedings of the Memphis Conference of Speech Communication Teacher Educators. August, 1973. Edited by R. R. Allen and P. Judson Newcombe. (In progress.)

[14]C. A. Bowers, "Accountability from a Humanist Point of View," The Educational Forum, XXXV (May, 1971), 484.

[15]Ibid., 482.

[16]H. A. Wilson, "Assessment of Values Poses Measurement Challenge," National Assessment of Educational Progress Newsletter, VI (September, 1973), 4.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Michael Shugrue, "Educational Responsibility," Today's Speech, XIX (Fall, 1971), 34.

[19]Theodore Clevenger, Jr., "A Survival Manual for the Speech Profession," Today's Speech, XX (Spring, 1972), 8.

[20]Robert C. Jeffrey, "SCA: Summoning Constructive Action," Today's

Speech, XXI (Spring, 1973), 9.

[21]Proceedings of the Memphis Conference of Speech Communication Teacher Educators, op. cit.

[22]Ibid.